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Jesus and the Wilderness Community at Qumran

by ETHELBERT STAUFFER

translated by Hans Spalteholz

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Introduction

THE Dead Sea Scrolls have been making headlines ever since their discovery was first announced to the world in an Associated Press dispatch from Jerusalem on April 26, 1948. They have also provided a steady stream of materials for Ph.D. dissertations and Sunday supplement articles. "A Phenomenal Discovery" was the headline over Dr. G. Ernest Wright's announcement of the find in the popular little quarterly *The Biblical Archaeologist* in 1948, and phenomenal has been the interest in these scrolls during the past decade and a half. Their implications for Old Testament study, for New Testament backgrounds, and for the rise of primitive Christianity and rabbinical Judaism have all been intensely studied. But nowhere has the interest been keener, and the attempts at application more complex, than with regard to Jesus of Nazareth. It is this crucial question, of the relationship of Jesus and the community in the Wilderness of Judea which produced the Qumran scrolls, which Professor Ethelbert Stauffer of Erlangen University here tackles with forthrightness and about which he reaches clear-cut conclusions.

Why interest in the Dead Sea Scrolls has been high among scholars, church members, and persons without any academic or religious affiliations is easy to see. The triumphs of archeology in uncovering the past always stir us, especially when there are texts and documents which have lain unseen by

human eyes for centuries. There is an ever-present hankering to know more about our past. And when the new discoveries burst upon us with romantic details surrounding the story of how the materials were turned up—as here, with an intrepid Bedouin boy exploring musty caves in search of a lost goat—and when the whole business is surrounded by an air of mystery (“Exactly when were the scrolls found, 1945 or 1947? Did some rot away while buried in a shopkeeper’s garden at Bethlehem?”) and even an air of danger (for the desert is always dangerous, and one of the go-betweens in early negotiations about the scrolls was killed in Arab-Israeli fighting), so much the better for whetting our curiosity! The interest of some was probably heightened because the scroll finds turned up, in part, in the new state of Israel. Many more read the news with eagerness because here were writings from the land of the Bible and from the very time of events mentioned in Scripture. Chiefly, however, the scrolls from Qumran caught the public eye because they came from the same general period as that of Christian beginnings, and they have held the public mind especially because they touch upon the life and teachings of Jesus. Here has been the focal point of interest for many readers, and this is the subject of *Jesus and the Wilderness Community at Qumran*.

Can this Qumran community be called the “spiritual home” of Jesus and of Christianity? Dr. Stauffer seeks to point out in just what sense such a phrase is correct, and in what way it misleads. While for some people any attempt to talk of Christian beginnings in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been anathema, for others all things Christian and all elements in Jesus’ life could be explained by the Qumran documents. Edmund Wilson, in a widely quoted phrase, spoke of the “Qumran monastery” as being “perhaps, more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity,” and a number of scholars have put forth sensational theories, especially about the “Teacher of Righteousness” as a prototype of Jesus. All this, as Professor Stauffer reports, “created a tremendous stir

among laymen who did not know" all they might have known about the origins of Christianity.

Thus, among the reasons which account for the concern and anxiety on the part of some over what the Dead Sea Scrolls might mean for their understanding of Jesus Christ, there are at least two factors at work, as I noted in a lecture at Mansfield College, Oxford, in 1960: (1) the rude way in which the significance of the scrolls was announced to the average person; and (2) the poor preparation which most people, inside as well as outside the churches, seminarians and pastors as well as lay people, had for assessing such new finds (cf. "The Dead Sea Scrolls in America: A Survey of Five Years of Popular Literature," *The Lutheran Quarterly*, XII, No. 2 [May, 1960], 91-110).

Although, from 1948 on, the public press and articles in journals devoted to biblical study were reporting as much as could be known about the scroll finds, it was only with the May 14, 1955 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine that the topic took its phenomenal grip on the public mind. A deftly written article by Edmund Wilson, later expanded into a book, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*, set forth an exciting account of how the scrolls were found and analyzed something of their meaning as spelled out under the guidance of André Dupont-Sommer. This French scholar, once an abbé in the Roman Catholic Church, had devoted himself to study of the scrolls from 1949 on, and by 1955 had produced two volumes of "observations" on the manuscripts from the Dead Sea; both these volumes had been translated into English but cannot be said to have caused much stir outside of scholarly circles. This sort of material Wilson exploited in writing his book, and by stressing, without all the usual notes of scholarly caution, some of the things he felt the scrolls implied for Christian origins, he thus skyrocketed Qumran to fame. Even more sensational theories were to follow, not just in learned journals but in the popular press and over the radio. And when there were added hints of a veiled conspiracy on the part of New Testament scholars and conservative religious

leaders (Christian and Jewish alike) to play down the scrolls, to avoid their implications out of fear for what the scrolls might do to their orthodox beliefs, the fat was in the fire. The Dead Sea Scrolls were a *cause célèbre!* It is a merit of Professor Stauffer's presentation that he does not avoid these charges and claims, and it is to his credit that he tries to see the merit even in such early, radical positions.

The second reason for the concern and anxiety occasioned by the scrolls is the simple fact that most of us, even those with some training in biblical and historical studies, were ill-prepared for the world to which the Dead Sea Scrolls opened our eyes. This world of Palestine in the century before and the century after the birth of Jesus had been known in rather vivid detail for the past fifty or one hundred years, but it was known mainly to experts; the average person had little access to this knowledge or paid scant attention to it. One of the writings on which this knowledge was based is the *Damascus Document*, or, as it is also called, "Document of the New Covenant in the Land of Damascus" or (still another name) the "Zadokite Fragments." Discovered in the storage room of a synagogue in Cairo in 1896-97 and published with translation in 1910, the document contains a set of rules and regulations for some ancient Jewish sect, rules and regulations which have now been recovered in Hebrew fragments from the caves of Qumran. Ancient documents like *Ecclesiasticus* and *Tobit* are part of the Apocrypha, those books which the Reformation excluded from the canon but still printed between the Old and New Testaments because of their value for history and edification (though not for doctrine), and which Roman Catholics to this day count as Scripture. *Enoch* and the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* have long been available as part of the Pseudepigrapha (books "written under a false name," usually that of some early biblical hero like Enoch). Rabbinical materials existed in English translation. Even the works of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian of the late first century A.D., helped this ancient world come alive, and Josephus' *Works* were widely available, especially in the

translation of 1737 by that Cambridge mathematician of such bizarre scholarship, William Whiston. In fact, the world of Palestine in Jesus' day may have been even *more* alive for our grandparents than it has been for us, since they often kept (and read) Whiston's translation of Josephus alongside their King James Bible and *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Thus, long before the scrolls came to light, texts and documents describing the world of Christian origins abounded, giving insight into that world's hopes for the future and its fears of the present, into the hatreds, rivalries, and party alliances of Roman Palestine. But since all too often such source materials exist for us only as a reference in a Bible dictionary or as a half-forgotten footnote in a New Testament introduction, the orthodox picture of Jesus has sometimes been isolated from the world in which he really lived, while the liberal portrait of Jesus was seriously modernized and ennobled, to accord with turn-of-the-century standards of taste. And the neo-orthodox Christ has often been exalted so high above the environment of Herod's Palestine, or existentialized into a "moving spirit" for today, that contact with sectarian Jewish strife and Galilean life of the first century was all but lost. Small wonder that the world on which the Dead Sea Scrolls opened windows once again came as a shock to those of us who had created our own image of Jesus. Our stiffly traditional portraits and the rather sentimental concepts we had allowed ourselves to take over from modern writers proved vulnerable when confronted by the sharp accusations and radical reconstructions made (though often wrongly) on the basis of the scrolls from Qumran. Hence much of the questioning and uncertainty in recent years; hence the flood of books about Qumran.

But how is this relation between Jesus and the Wilderness community assessed today? By now certain parallels are obvious (though some of these parallels exist simply because Jesus and Qumran both stem from a common Old Testament background). These similarities Professor Stauffer simply concedes. By now there are obvious differences apparent too. Of

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these, careful scholars have long been aware, and T. H. Gaster, for example, in his book *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (1956), listed some cardinal Christian teachings which are nowhere found in the scrolls (p. 12). In his books in German, Dr. Stauffer has been compiling characteristic features of the Qumran group (some eighteen are listed in his paperback *Jerusalem und Rom* [1957], p. 57) and then contrasting them with what he finds to be the characteristic features of Jesus of Nazareth. Twenty-two such points of difference between Jesus and the Qumran movement are listed in his study of 1959, *Die Botschaft Jesu*, pp. 13-15. In the present essay he boils these contrasts down to eight, which arise directly out of the ancient documents, plus one basic, underlying antithesis, the attitude toward legalism. In seeing the fundamental "either/or" in this matter of attitude toward the law, and in depicting Jesus as opposing the legalistic piety of both Qumran and the Pharisees, it seems that Professor Stauffer (though he does not state the point) is also placing his finger on a fundamental affinity between Jesus and Paul. For if there is one particular vocation which Paul had in early Christianity, it was to oppose legalism in all forms and to show what the gospel means. It is that same opposition to legalism which stamps Jesus, in contrast to Qumran. For all this sharp antithesis which he poses between law and gospel, however, Dr. Stauffer also succeeds in evoking our interest in and sympathy for the people of Qumran, as part of the world of Jesus' day.

Points of dispute admittedly still remain over the Qumran documents, and some of the views taken in this essay will continue to demand discussion. Professor Stauffer's caution, for example, in not flatly identifying the people at Qumran with the Jewish sect of the "Essenes" (of whom we had known for centuries before the scrolls were found) may come as a surprise to many who have read secondary accounts about the Dead Sea Scrolls. Yet while popular writers speak of the Qumranites as Essenes, there are still enough technical problems, in the opinion of many experts, to warrant some note of reserve. Dr. Stauffer prefers to speak of *die Wüstenleute*,

literally "the Wilderness people," a term which we have usually translated as "Wilderness sectarians." Likewise with his treatment of the *Damascus Document*: fragments from Qumran now show, even more clearly than when Dr. Stauffer wrote this essay, that this Rule for the Community, or something very much like it, was in use at Qumran. Accordingly, Professor Stauffer's practice of lumping together the materials from Qumran and the *Damascus Document* as evidence is now seen to be quite in order, and there is also merit in his speaking of all these sources under the common heading of "texts from the Wilderness," as other writers have done. Of course, there can always be debate over the meaning of individual passages. But the fact that the reference to the original Hebrew document is regularly supplied by Dr. Stauffer, sometimes with citations from the secondary literature telling why a particular interpretation has been followed, will enable those who read Hebrew to check the point for themselves. And references added by the editor in the notes to several standard English translations of the Dead Sea Scrolls (three of them happily available in paperbacks) will enable the general reader to examine the context for himself. Having thus supplied references to the original Hebrew and to standard English translations, we have deemed it permissible and advisable to translate each of Professor Stauffer's quotations from the scrolls directly from his German, rather than select an existent English rendering of the scrolls which might or might not interpret the Hebrew as he does.

The author, Ethelbert Stauffer, is today Professor for New Testament Studies and Ancient Numismatics at Erlangen University. He is particularly known for his knowledge of rabbinic sources and of ancient coins (evidence from both of which appears in striking application in what he writes). He is further known for his concern with New Testament theology in general and for his use of materials from the New Testament world to reconstruct the historical Jesus against the background of his own day.

Dr. Stauffer was born on May 8, 1902, the son of a pastor

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in Friedelsheim in the Palatinate. After theological study in several German universities he became assistant professor of the New Testament at Halle (1930-34), then at Bonn (1934-47), and in 1948 professor at Erlangen in Bavaria. His doctoral dissertation, published in 1929 under the title "Basic Concepts for a Morphology of New Testament Thought," pointed the way toward a New Testament theology which he completed in 1938 but which, due to government regulations, could not be printed until 1941. The book sold out quickly in its first edition, and when permission for a second could not be obtained, arrangements had to be made through church organizations to reprint it in Switzerland in 1945; it was distributed through the World Council of Churches as an aid to biblical study among German-speaking brethren. Further German editions followed, as well as an English translation (1955). The book displays a deep concern for the thought world of the New Testament, especially that of Jewish apocalyptic, the very world one finds in the Dead Sea Scrolls (though these were still hidden in their caves at that time, and Dr. Stauffer worked from the other documents already available). The book speaks with a clarity and an urgency which characterizes all Dr. Stauffer writes, and the chapters have a gripping style which anyone can follow. But the person who takes up the English edition of the book ought to be sure to examine the plates in the German edition (unfortunately omitted in the English), since Professor Stauffer likes to illustrate his points from art objects of the past.

In the 1930's Dr. Stauffer wrote a number of articles for the well-known Kittel *Wörterbuch* of the New Testament, one of which, on *agape* ("love"), has been translated into English. His series of historical sketches, *Christ and the Caesars*, appeared after the war and enjoyed great success in an English translation (1955). In recent years he has devoted himself especially to research into the life of Jesus, the first fruits of which is a trilogy of paperback volumes in German, intended for popular consumption and to point toward a more definitive portrayal of Jesus. One volume,

Jerusalem und Rom, deals with the background "tale of two cities"; the second, which has appeared in separate translations in Britain and America as *Jesus and his Story*, is a conventional "life" with some unconventional twists; and the third, *Die Botschaft Jesu damals und heute*, takes up Jesus' message and its meaning today. At many points, for example in his insistence that early Christianity was "judaized" and "qumranized," as well as "hellenized," Dr. Stauffer is reflecting characteristically independent views. At some points—in his efforts to describe Jesus' physical appearance, for instance, or to present a chronology of his ministry—he is going in determined opposition to the whole trend in recent New Testament studies. And when he interjects a certain anti-Pauline note into his reconstruction of Jesus' message and deliberately employs examples from Nazi atrocities to make certain points, colleagues and opponents in Germany have been quick to point out dangerous tendencies. A lively "pamphlet war" has ensued, which need not detain us here except to note that Professor Stauffer's most recent little book on "Jesus, Paul—and Us" is a reply to certain of these critics.

His numerous articles in learned journals cannot be listed here, though some of those about the Dead Sea Scrolls are noted in the final footnote to this essay. Dr. Stauffer is one of the editors for *Novum Testamentum*, an international quarterly, and has contributed sections on Christian beginnings to *Historia Mundi*, a manual of world history. In 1962, in honor of his sixtieth birthday, a dozen friends and former pupils presented him with a collection of essays on New Testament themes. Entitled *Donum Gratulatorium*, the volume includes contributions by scholars in Germany, England, Hungary, Sweden, and Japan, among them a Roman Catholic and a Jew.

The essay printed here appeared originally in the Calwer Hefte series under the title *Jesus und die Wüstengemeinde am Totem Meer* (Heft 9; Stuttgart, 1957; 2nd ed., 1960). Additions from the 1960 edition have been incorporated in the English translation which has been prepared by the Rev.

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Hans Spalteholz, of the faculty of Concordia College, Portland, Oregon.

The notes have been translated and largely rewritten by the editor to refer to works in English. A few minor errors in the German editions have been corrected, and the whole work approved by Dr. Stauffer. Bibliographical details on the books mentioned above will be found at the close of this volume.

Lutheran Theological Seminary
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JOHN REUMANN

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QUMRAN AND THE TEXTS FROM THE WILDERNESS

THE Qumran texts—these are the much discussed manuscript scrolls and fragments which have come to light since 1947 in the area dotted by caves at the northwestern corner of the Dead Sea, about seven miles south of Jericho.¹ This is the region where John the Baptist lived “in the wilderness,” and also perhaps where Jesus stayed during his temptation.

¹ English translations of the documents discovered at Qumran, together with discussion of their contents, are found in Millar Burrows' two volumes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1955), and *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking Press, 1958); or, in a freer and perhaps more readable version which is less literal, Theodor H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1956); or, more recently, with inclusion of even later discoveries, André Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, “Meridian Books,” 1962); and Géza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Penguin Books, 1962). The texts themselves are being published in their original languages, Hebrew Aramaic, and Greek, in several series of volumes. The seven scrolls originally found in Cave 1 have been published either by the American Schools of Oriental Research, New Haven, Connecticut, or the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Subsequent finds have been published in the series *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955- , three volumes to date). For details on all titles, see C. Burchard, *Bibliographie zu den Handschriften vom Toten Meer* (“Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 76”; Berlin: Töpelmann, 1957); or W. S. LaSor, *Bibliography of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 1948-1957* (“Fuller Library Bulletin No. 31 [Fall, 1958]”; Pasadena: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1958); from 1957 on, bibliographies appear in the *Revue de Qumran* (Paris).

Jesus and the Wilderness Community at Qumran

At the time of Jesus the so-called Essenes had large settlements, monastic communities of thousands of people, in the immediate vicinity of the Qumran caves. The Jewish historian Josephus (*ca. A.D. 90*) writes about them, as does Philo of Alexandria (*ca. A.D. 40*). Pliny the Elder, the Roman author (*ca. A.D. 75*), also tells us a few things about these Essene settlements.

The Qumran texts are, quite evidently, very close in spirit to the thought world of the Essenes. However, to designate the inhabitants of Qumran simply as Essenes strikes me, and many others, as quite unwarranted. There is a relation, but, in our opinion, not exactly an identity. Rather the Essenes are most likely a late offshoot of the group at Qumran.

Out of the same thought world as the Qumran texts come the fragments of the so-called *Damascus Document*, discovered in the winter of 1896-97 in a "geniza" or repository for discarded manuscripts at the Ezra Synagogue in Old Cairo. This document has scarcely received the attention it deserves. It deals with the ordered life of a group or sect in the vicinity of Damascus and is also very closely related to the Qumran texts in literary style. In the following pages we want to group together the Qumran texts and the *Damascus Document*, and we shall do so under the inclusive heading "texts from the Wilderness" or simply "Wilderness texts." And the authors and readers of these Wilderness texts we shall simply term the "Wilderness sect."

Finally, it might be well to point out that the Wilderness texts, in turn, fit into a larger complex of literature, produced in Palestinian Judaism, which has long been known to us. Among these writings are the *Book of Ecclesiasticus* or *The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach*, the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Books of Enoch*, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and a short piece that we know only through a single, defective Latin manuscript, the so-called *Assumption of Moses*.

For a long time the *Damascus Document* was the only one of the documents from the Wilderness for which the original

Hebrew text was readily available in a cheap edition.² Hence we shall quote it in particular. But our presentation of the Wilderness texts and their thought world is based on all of the materials that have been made available thus far.

² *Die Damaskusschrift*, ed. Leonhard Rost, in the series begun by Hans Lietzmann, "Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen, 167" (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1933). Definitive editions of the Dead Sea Scrolls themselves are, of course, now being published in the series mentioned above in note 1, but Rost's edition remains the most convenient, inexpensive place where a student of Hebrew can check the original of one of these documents for himself.

JESUS AND THE SPIRITUAL CLIMATE OF THE WILDERNESS COMMUNITY

WHEN the first discoveries were made in 1947, there was much rejoicing, for one thing because these were documents preserved in the original Hebrew and Aramaic in which they had been composed. They were not secondary translations, as were, for example, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.³ The Aramaic leather scroll, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, which could finally be unrolled only after several years of effort and is now published, may be considered the most important document for studying Jesus' mother tongue.⁴

³ [The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, an English translation of which is available in R. H. Charles' monumental work, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), II, 282-367, has been preserved for us, until recently, only in later Greek, Slavonic, and Latin translations, though the original seems to have been in Hebrew or Aramaic. Since Professor Stauffer wrote this essay, however, fragments have been found in Cave 1 at Qumran of an Aramaic manuscript of the *Testament of Levi*, one of the twelve sections of the *Testaments*; a fragment in Hebrew of the *Testament of Naphtali* has also been reported. Cf. Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-305, or Morton Smith, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), IV, 575-79. While the exact relationship between these finds at Qumran and later translations of the *Testaments* is still being debated, it now appears that we have parts of this document too in the original Semitic form, a further cause for rejoicing.—EDITOR.]

⁴ [This text was one of the seven scrolls initially taken by Bedouin from Cave 1 in 1947 and subsequently brought to the United States by the Syrian Orthodox Metropolitan, Mar Athanasius Samuel. Only in 1954 was it sold and taken to Israel, where two more years of delicate work were required before the brittle, decomposed leather could be un-

The second value of the Qumran scrolls is this: we can be certain that these texts are of direct Palestinian provenance. This is by no means the case with all the writings that biblical scholars use. Josephus was born in Palestine but died in Rome, an apostate Jew. Philo lived in Alexandria. And the Mandaean texts, which aroused so much interest thirty years ago, come from the region of the Euphrates River.

A third fact gives the discoveries at Qumran special value: they belong undoubtedly to the pre-Christian era. There is general agreement today that these writings date back many decades before the birth of Christ. The questions of when these particular manuscripts and fragments were *copied* and when they were *buried* are, of course, a different matter. But the writings were *composed* in the pre-Christian era. One group of scholars dates most of the manuscripts at *ca.* 90 B.C. Another group, to which I belong, thinks in some instances of 140 or 160 B.C. We are not worried about when and how this controversy will eventually be settled. Students of the New Testament are in the meantime already quite content to know that the texts are definitely pre-Christian. Formerly when we employed a Mandaean text or Josephus or Philo or the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* to shed light on the New Testament, the question always arose: Could Jesus, Paul, or the evangelists really have been acquainted with these writings? Now, however, we know that Jesus, Paul, and the evangelists could have been familiar with the thought world of the Wilderness texts, directly or indirectly.

We are also indebted to the texts from the Wilderness in a fourth way. The misconception that the Palestinian Jews rolled and the text published. Originally referred to as the "Lamech Apocalypse" because one fragment which had broken off referred to Lamech (cf. Gen. 4:17-24), the scroll was subsequently discovered to be an expanded version of parts of Genesis 4-15, with Lamech, Noah, and Abraham telling their stories in the first person. The Aramaic, edited by N. Avigad and Y. Yadin, has been published as *A Genesis Apocryphon* (Jerusalem, 1956), and translations are available in Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-94, or in Vermes, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-24.—EDITOR.]

of the New Testament era were an unliterary people who possessed, beyond the Old Testament, almost nothing but "oral tradition" has now been once and for all demolished, thanks to the discovery of the library in the caves at the Dead Sea. The writer of Ecclesiastes was right: "Of making many books there is no end" (Eccles. 12:12).

But enough of these technical matters. Our joy increases even more when we study the texts themselves. With awe we stand before the religious earnestness that meets us here. It is evident above all in the psalms from Qumran, in which the life of faith finds its most direct expression, as it always does in psalm literature. But even the legal texts or codes of rules contain liturgical sections, through which the faith of the Qumran people reaches out to us directly. Only a small sampling can be noted here. For example, the *Rule of the Community* at Qumran concludes with a long prayer containing this statement: "When troubles begin, I will sing praises to him."⁵ These words might have been inscribed with a fingernail on the wall of a cell in a concentration camp. The Qumran movement was a martyr movement. But it was also aware of the distress in the world outside: "All nations hate evil . . . and yet they all continue to walk in it."⁶

Our concern here, however, is not an evaluation of the Wilderness texts as such; it is, rather, the relation of primitive Christianity to the Qumran movement. The problem was set into motion particularly by the French orientalist, André

⁵ [The *Rule of the Community*, originally called by some translators the "Manual of Discipline" or by others now "The Scroll of the Rule," is technically designated *1QS*, meaning the *serek*, or "rule" for community life, found in Cave 1 at Qumran. The line quoted is *1QS* x.17, found in slightly varying translations in Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, *op. cit.*, p. 386; in Gaster, *op. cit.*, p. 117; in Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 99; and in Vermes, *op. cit.*, p. 90.—EDITOR.]

⁶ The quotation is from a fragment from Cave 1 to which the name the *Book of Mysteries* has been given (*1Q Myst.* = *1Q27*). The Hebrew text with French translation is printed in D. Barthélemy and J. T. Milik, *Qumran Cave I* ("Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, I"; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), p. 103, col. I, lines 8-9; English translation in Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings*, *op. cit.*, p. 327, and in Vermes, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

Dupont-Sommer. Since 1950 he has published a whole series of books with modest titles but extremely exciting hypotheses.⁷ In the course of publication of the texts from the Wilderness, these hypotheses naturally underwent some change, but their content can be summed up as follows: here in Qumran we have discovered the spiritual home of Christianity! In a certain sense and to a certain degree Dupont-Sommer is no doubt right.

In Qumran we have indeed discovered *the spiritual home of John the Baptist*. Already prior to 1947 one could surmise that the Baptist was at home in the thought world revealed to us in the *Damascus Document*, in the *Assumption of Moses*, and in similar texts. That has now been confirmed. This is not to say that knowing the Qumran literature means that we also know the nature of the Baptist, his mission and his message. But at least we now know where he came from. Where his path led him later, however, was no longer determined by his Wilderness teachers but by a quite different source. Anyone who has studied the Qumran texts will read the references to John in the Gospel of Luke with new perception, not only the passage where we are told that John spent his whole youth "in the wilderness,"⁸ but also the one that

⁷ *Aperçus préliminaires sur les manuscrits de la mer Morte* (Paris, 1950), translated as *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Preliminary Survey* (Oxford: Blackwell, and New York: Macmillan, 1952). *Nouveaux Aperçus sur les manuscrits de la mer Morte* (Paris, 1953), translated as *The Jewish Sect of Qumrân and the Essenes: New Studies on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Valentine, Mitchell and Co., and New York: Macmillan, 1954). *Les Écrits esséniens découverts près de la mer Morte* (Paris, 1959), translated as *The Essene Writings from Qumran* (see note 1, above). In addition, Dupont-Sommer has published numerous articles, over forty of which are listed in the last-mentioned book, pp. 413-16.

⁸ From the parallelism of Luke 1:80 ("the child [John] grew and became strong in spirit, and he was in the wilderness till the day of his manifestation to Israel") and Luke 2:40 ("and the child [Jesus] grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him"), the conclusion results that the noun "child" (Greek, *paidion*) in 1:80 is the subject which carries right on through for the second half of that verse too ("the child was in the wilderness"). Hence it appears that the Baptist was brought into "the wilderness" already in childhood.

reads: "The word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness" (3:2). Here is a turning point; here the focus is not merely on the word of John's teachers but on the word of the Lord. Today we see this much more clearly and soberly and at the same time much more fully than we did ten years ago. But what John the Baptist was doing until that point, and how he thought, how he was taught, and how he lived till then—that we can determine quite fully with the help of the Qumran texts.

Not only John the Baptist, but also *the Evangelist John*—in fact, the five Johannine writings of the New Testament—are now beginning to make complete sense to us for the first time. Here too scholars had made tentative beginnings in sound research before the discoveries at Qumran; now these beginnings have been most brilliantly confirmed. Consequently today we think quite differently about the thought world underlying the Gospel of John than did Rudolf Bultmann, who, in his commentary on the Fourth Gospel (a remarkable commentary in its own way), drew heavily on the Mandaean texts, which stem from the period of the Arab conquest (seventh century A.D.) and the region of the Euphrates.⁹ We are gaining new insights also for the understanding of Paul (e.g., the letter to the Colossians), for the background history of the first two chapters of Luke, and above all for the analysis of the Gospel of Matthew. In many respects the

⁹ [R. Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* ("Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar" series; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1950); an English translation has been promised for some time. Bultmann's view, that the Fourth Gospel reflects ideas found in the Mandaean texts and is to be expounded in light of them, was developed as far back as 1926. An example of how he employs Mandaean material may be seen in his popular paperback, *Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956), pp. 162-71 and the footnotes. An introductory discussion on the problem appears in C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1953), "Mandaism," pp. 115-30, though this is now a bit dated in view of further studies and renewed interest in the Mandaean aroused by the Dead Sea Scrolls and recent discovery of gnostic documents in Egypt.—EDITOR.]

group from which the first gospel arose must have been very close in spirit to Qumran. Dupont-Sommer is certainly right in all these regards. We are now able to construct a new and clearer picture of the beginnings of Christianity, insofar as we are today better able than before to evaluate John the Baptist, the Johannine corpus, the Gospel of Matthew, and several other texts and authors of the New Testament with reference to their spiritual and intellectual bases.

When Dupont-Sommer uses the term Christianity, however, he means above all Jesus of Nazareth. When he speaks of earliest Christianity, he means to say that Qumran has shed completely new light also on the spiritual home of Jesus and on the religious and intellectual roots of his message. Dupont-Sommer himself has stated these conclusions with extreme care. But as usual, a group of enthusiastic followers sprang up, who expressed themselves less cautiously. One of them is Edmund Wilson, author of the popularly written book *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*. He writes, for example, "The monastery [of the Qumran sect], this structure of stone that endures, between the bitter waters and the precipitous cliffs, with its oven and its inkwells, its mill and its cesspool, its constellation of sacred fonts and the unadorned graves of its dead, is perhaps, more than Bethlehem or Nazareth, the cradle of Christianity."¹⁰ "More than Bethlehem or Nazareth"—those are the crucial words!

Similar opinions have been voiced by the young orientalist John M. Allegro, formerly of the University of Manchester, especially in talks given on the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1956. He focused particularly on a number of texts, passages, or fragments which are extremely difficult to read and have been much debated ever since the work of Dupont-Sommer. These passages may suggest that the Teacher of Righteousness, a key figure in the early life of the Wilderness

¹⁰ Edmund Wilson, *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 97 f. Wilson's book was soon translated into German, *Die Schriftrollen vom Toten Meer* (Munich, 1956).

movement, was crucified.¹¹ This, of course, created a tremendous stir among the laymen who do not know that at least two thousand people were crucified in the vicinity of Jerusalem during the life-span of Jesus alone. The Qumran movement was a martyr movement. Even if the Teacher of Righteousness actually died on a cross, he was just one martyr figure among many who were thus executed at this time (in my opinion, *ca.* 162 B.C.).

In Germany too there are a number of scholars who insist on an intimate connection between Jesus and the Wilderness tradition. The gist of their assertions to date is as follows: that at least one unique characteristic of Jesus, which many people had previously considered his very own, nevertheless probably originated in Qumran—his radical ethics.¹²

Thus everything narrows down to one basic question: What is the relation between Jesus and the spirit of the Qumran texts? Not, what is the relation between Jesus and the people

¹¹ Allegro subsequently presented his views, in modified form, in a Pelican Book, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Harmondsworth, England, and Baltimore, Maryland, 1956). Cf. also Allegro's article, "Further Light on the History of the Qumran Sect," in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXV (June, 1956), 89-95, and the reply to it by H. H. Rowley, "4QpNahum and the Teacher of Righteousness," in the next issue of the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXV (Sept., 1956), 188-93. Rowley's criticism of Allegro's assumptions and conclusions is pertinent on all counts and may be supplemented still further by noting that the *Assumption of Moses* also mentions the action of crucifixion about 162 B.C. (8:1 reads, *confitentes in cruce suspendet*, "he will crucify those who confess"). Allegro seems to have overlooked this passage as well as the one in Josephus, *Antiquities* XII. v. 4, 256 [which also mentions Jews being crucified by the Seleucid ruler Antiochus Epiphanes. Cf. E. Stauffer, *Jerusalem und Rom im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1957), pp. 124-25, 131.—EDITOR.]

¹² Cf. Herbert Braun, "Beobachtungen zur Torahverschärfung im häretischen Spätjudentum," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXIX (1954), cols. 347 ff. Cf. also Kurt Schubert, "Bergpredigt und Texte von En Fesha," *Theologische Quartalschrift*, CXXXV (1955), 320-37; English translation in *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, ed. Krister Stendahl (New York: Harper, 1957), pp. 118-128, "The Sermon on the Mount and the Qumran Texts."

Jesus and the Spiritual Climate of the Wilderness Community

of Qumran; for at present we are unable to say whether Jesus had any personal contact with them. But the spiritual temper or vision of Jesus and the spiritual temper or vision of the Qumran people, these are the two religio-historical elements that we must compare and contrast. We feel that at least eight differences need to be set forth.

EIGHT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JESUS AND QUMRAN

T

HE first special feature of the Qumran texts is their *clericalism*. That is to say, the priests play a larger role here than in any of the other late Jewish texts known to us. There is reference to a high or chief priest, to the sons of Aaron, and to a multiplicity of priestly functions. What is more, the references are not simply to priests as such, but above all to priests of a very specific dynasty, namely, the house of the High Priest Zadok. In keeping with the teaching of the late books of the Old Testament (Ezekiel and Chronicles), the legitimate high priests must stem from the house of Zadok. The Qumran people evidently stand in this tradition, for time and again they underscore the special significance and calling of the house of Zadok and its priests.

Where in the message of Jesus do we find this kind of clericalism? Where does Jesus declare that nothing can take place between God and his people without the mediation of a priest, without the intercessory office of the Zadokite dynasty? Nowhere. The gospels utter no word about the special calling of the priesthood (Zadokite or non-Zadokite) in the story of the kingdom of God. On the contrary, there is a detail in the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:31-32), in which two Jewish clerics catch sight of the battered man along the way and quickly pass by on the other side of the road—this is the way Jesus could speak of the priesthood. Hence it is surely no historical accident that there is not the slightest indication in the tradition of the sayings of Jesus that the course of the kingdom of God would not advance a step

further without the priesthood or particularly without the house of Zadok. Such claims, however, can be read here and there in nearly every section of the Qumran texts. This clericalism is the first difference between the Qumran sect and Jesus.

The second characteristic of the Wilderness people is their *ritualism*. According to the conviction of Qumran, the Lord God is concerned, above all, that the ceremonies and rituals which he has established in the law and which his theologians (who are really "Torah lawyers"¹³) continue to derive from the law ought to be scrupulously observed every day and every hour, every week and every month, every year and every Sabbatical year. Among these rites which daily and hourly shaped life, the complex of rites and ceremonies for purification plays a special role. Adolf von Harnack once said of the Essenes: These folks never managed to get out of the bathtub, day or night.¹⁴ This applies no less to the Qumran people. No sooner had they thought, said, seen, or barely touched something unclean, than they had to get "into the bathtub."

¹³ ["Torah" is the Old Testament term for divine instruction and guidance, especially as revealed through the law of Moses. Increasingly the term had come to be identified in Jesus' day with the written contents of the law (cf. Neh. 8:8) and to be equated with the Pentateuch or first five books of the Old Testament. For accurate interpretation of this, "Torah lawyers" or specialists in the law, were, of course, needed; in the gospels the scribes perform this function.—EDITOR.]

¹⁴ I thus recall Harnack's bon mot from his lectures. The sentence appears in a somewhat milder form in a Finnish transcript of Harnack's lectures on the essence of Christianity in 1899-1900; there it runs, "The Essenes were ritually clean down to the last degree. They betook themselves to the bathtub, if anyone touched them. . ." Cf. Friedrich Israel, "Ein Ereignis der neuesten Kirchengeschichte Finnlands," in *Harnack-Ehrung, Beiträge zur Kirchengeschichte* (Leipzig, 1921), p. 482. In the printed editions of the lecture, the bathtub is completely removed, and only "countless daily washings" are mentioned; cf. A. von Harnack, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (new ed., 1950), p. 20. [The English translation, *What Is Christianity?* (London and New York, 1901; 3rd rev. ed., 1904, p. 33), similarly speaks merely of "frequent ablutions every day."—EDITOR.]

Where do we find anything like this in the message of Jesus? Nowhere. We know how critically Jesus viewed the purification rituals as well as the dietary regulations of his day. We know his words: "Do you not see that whatever goes into a man from outside cannot defile him ['defile' or 'make unclean'—the favorite word of the Wilderness sect!]. . . . What comes out of a man is what defiles a man" (Mark 7:18 ff.). Anyone speaking in this way can hardly be of the opinion that the kingdom of God will stand or fall with the observance of certain rites.

Thirdly, according to the *Rule of the Community* at Qumran, the Wilderness people are required to "love all the sons of light and hate all the sons of darkness (i.9 f.; cf. i.3 f.; in the Bible, cf. Ps. 26:5, 137:9, 139:21; Luke 9:54; Rev. 6:10). The Essenes pledge, in their covenant oath, "always to hate the unrighteous and to cleave to the righteous" (Josephus, *Jewish War* 2, 8, 7, 139).

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaims: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:43 f.; cf. Luke 6:27 f., 6:35, 23:34; Acts 7:60).

The fourth hallmark of the Qumran sect is its *militarism*. Apparently the Wilderness people were quite often the spiritual advisers of the resistance movement in the days of Jesus and the apostles, advisers, that is, of the anti-Roman, in part also of the anti-Herodian partisans. Not only did they provide the theological rationale, but they themselves joined the ranks of those on the "front." We know that the Essenes, who come from a similar thought world, constituted a great share of the martyrs in the Jewish War that came to its sorry end with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. In 1947 a Hebrew manuscript was found in Qumran Cave I which the first editor aptly entitled: "The War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness."¹⁵ It provides a virtual cam-

¹⁵ [Professor E. L. Sukenik, of Hebrew University, supplied the title, perhaps (as some have thought) not without some reference to the

paign strategy designed for the final battle at the end of days. Naturally the priests again play the main role, and the high priest of the house of Zadok is the dominant personality. The manual sets forth the trumpet signals, the banners, the prayers before and after the battle, the specific military maneuvers. If at times it all sounds rather strange, we should not forget that these writings embodied serious aims and concrete hopes. For example, in a work much loved by the Qumran sect we find the following prophetic utterance: "Woe unto you who love the works of unrighteousness. Know that you will be delivered into the hands of the righteous. They will cut off your necks and slaughter you without mercy."¹⁸

Where do we read anything comparable in the gospels? Nowhere. On the contrary, Jesus says in Matthew 26:52, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword." Peter and his companions had two swords with them, and Peter "cut loose," with a very concrete hope in mind: If we raise our sword in this apocalyptic night, God will dispatch legions of his angels to our aid; the victory will be certain. But Jesus says: No, he who takes the sword will perish with the sword. And he foregoes the military aid of the heavenly host. This is a pointed renunciation of apocalyptic militarism, whether it be of Qumran or any other origin.

The fifth peculiarity of the Qumran people is that they were "calendar specialists." It is touching to observe how seriously, in the opinion of the Qumran sect, God takes all the calendrical questions, how the salvation of the world depends on the proper reckoning of the years, days, and months; and on the correctly timed observance of the Passover, the Feast of the Tabernacles, and the Sabbath. Even today cal-

conflict then going on between the new state of Israel and surrounding Arab countries. His edition of the Hebrew text was published posthumously in Jerusalem in 1954, and his son Yigael Yadin, himself a former Israeli military leader, has carried out further studies of the War Scroll.—EDITOR.]

¹⁸ The *Book of Enoch* 98.12 (in R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, op. cit.*, II, 269).

endrical differences mark the divisions of the major branches of Christendom. We can always have differences of opinion about these matters. But not so in Qumran, for there the calendar question was made a fundamental religious issue with the assertion that nothing could be more important to the Lord God than these calendrical problems.

Where do we find this in the teachings of Jesus? Nowhere. We are not sure according to which calendar Jesus lived and observed feast days. For example, it is quite possible that Jesus celebrated his last Passover according to a calendar different from the official Jewish one in Jerusalem. If so, it would solve a number of discrepancies in the chronology of the gospels. But if Jesus used a calendar deviating from the official Jewish one, then it is all the more striking that he nowhere said: Follow me and adopt my calendar. Or take the case of the rich young ruler whom he directed to the Ten Commandments and who then asked, "What more?" (Matt. 19:20). Jesus did not say to him: If you would be perfect, adopt the true calendar. Jesus simply never addressed himself to calendrical problems. Using the language of the Reformation, we could say that the calendar question was an "adiaphoron" for Jesus, a secondary matter. How different for the Wilderness people! They were convinced that the correct calendar was inscribed in heaven on divine tablets. What is more, they considered themselves to be the only people of their era with the true understanding of these divine tablets, because through a special apocalyptic prophet the Lord God had granted them a special revelation concerning the tablets.

This leads us to the sixth point. Another characteristic of the Wilderness sect is its predilection for *secret teachings*, special traditions above and beyond the Old Testament. For example, the sectarians knew the names of countless angels. These secret teachings were imparted only to the initiates, and only to those who proved themselves true over a prescribed period of time.

Where do we find anything like that in the teachings of

Jesus? Nowhere. In John 18:19 f. Jesus does not appear immediately before Caiaphas (that would have been counter to the law) but first of all before Annas for preliminary questioning, and Annas asks: Who are your disciples, and what is your teaching? The presupposition to this question is that Jesus is a secret teacher much like the "Teacher of Righteousness." He has secret teachings that he discloses to a secret circle, and for that secret circle there are highly secret membership lists. It is well known that whenever the leader of an underground movement is captured, one of the first things about which he is questioned is his confederates. The second question (What are your teachings?) means: What are you in the habit of saying in the little circle of followers whose names are on the membership rolls?¹⁷ Jesus answers: For months and years I have been speaking publicly in the court of the Temple. Everyone has heard it; I have said everything openly and nothing in secret. This strict rejection by Jesus of any notion of secret teachings and secret organization represents a most characteristic point of difference between him and Qumran.

Seventh, to these secret teachings belongs a concept that has also found its way into other writings, though it is only hinted at there. This concept is the expectation of a very special *Messiah*, one who must stem from the house of Aaron. Sometime in the future there will have to appear a clerical, a priestly, in fact, a high-priestly Messiah, who is to stand even above the Messiah of the house of David, that political Messiah whom we know from the Bible.

Where does Jesus speak of an Aaronic Messiah who is to come? Nowhere. On the contrary, in speaking of the future he speaks about the Son of man, of whose "ancestors" there is absolutely no mention. The Son of man fulfills his task at the end of time without a copy of his genealogy in his hand.

¹⁷ Cf. Ernst Bammel, "Kaiphas," in *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr), Vol. III (1959), col. 1091; and E. Stauffer, *Jerusalem und Rom*, *op. cit.*, pp. 67 and 70.

The eighth, and historically most revealing, characteristic of the Wilderness sect is its *criticism of the Jerusalem priesthood, the Temple cult, and the Temple in general*. This criticism is based on the fact that, from 175 B.C. on, no properly prescribed Zadokite high priest reigned any more in Jerusalem, down to the year A.D. 70 when sacrificial worship and all temple worship at Jerusalem came to a complete halt. The Wilderness sect considered all of the high priests who officiated in the Temple during those 245 years unlawful office-holders. Hence Qumran rejected the Temple cult in Jerusalem and considered the city and particularly the Mount of the Temple and, above all, the Temple itself as hopelessly defiled. For this reason the Wilderness sect settled at the Dead Sea and declared: On us the Lord God has bestowed his favor; he has turned his back on the Temple. Therefore the Zadokite and other priests of the Wilderness sect swore in their covenant oath "no longer to enter the sanctuary nor to kindle the flame on its altar."¹⁸

How does Jesus feel about the Temple cult and the city of the Temple? The answer: nowhere in the gospels do we find such a rejection.¹⁹ As a matter of fact, in a section that is truly exciting in view of our discussion, the Gospel of John notes that Jesus participated in the festival of the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem (10:22-23). The festival celebrates the cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem (ca. 165 B.C.) by Judas Maccabeus and his friends, after it had been defiled by heathen worship. Judas Maccabeus, however, does not stem from the house of Zadok. What is more, his father is the founding ancestor of the first unlawful dynasty of high priests, ruling from 153 B.C. till A.D. 37. The festival of the dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem is most intimately connected with this dynasty and its reforms, and it is in this

¹⁸ *Damascus Document* vi.12.

¹⁹ The Cleansing of the Temple (Mark 11:15-19 and parallels, John 2:13-17) belongs to the early period in Jesus' career, when he was still under the influence of John the Baptist.

Eight Differences between Jesus and Qumran

dedication festival that Jesus participates, according to John 10:22-23. Here then is sure proof that Jesus has nothing in common with the Qumran criticism of the Temple that is based on questions of genealogy.²⁰

²⁰ Since the Fourth Evangelist stood in some close relationship with the upper level of priestly circles at Jerusalem (cf. John 18:15) as well as with the Qumran sect and its critical view of the Temple, his testimony regarding Jesus' favorable attitude toward the Temple is especially noteworthy.

THE MAJOR ANTITHESIS

THESE then are the eight differences that strike us when we compare, in summary fashion, the gospel accounts of Jesus with the traditions of the Wilderness sect. Of course, differences always exist in the study of "spiritual climates" and the history of ideas. There are differences among the Essenes (over marriage or celibacy), within the Wilderness sect (questions concerning the Messiah), among the Rabbis (Hillel and Shammai), among the Baptist's disciples (the positions adopted in regard to Jesus), among the gospels (John and the Synoptics), among the leaders of the early church (Paul and James). Why should differences not also exist between the Wilderness sect and Jesus? And might there not also be points of contact? Naturally there are. Having accounted for the points of difference, we could, as it were, counterbalance them with the points of contact between Jesus and the Wilderness sect, in order, at last, carefully to tally similarities and differences against one another. Such an undertaking would, however, be endless and promise relative results at best. Instead let us ask the following question: In addition to the manifest differences and certain readily admitted points of contact between Jesus and the spirit of Qumran, are there also antitheses? Is there anywhere a genuine "either/or" which is a life-and-death matter? I answer that there exists at least one major antithesis between

Jesus and the spirit of the Qumran sect, one absolutely decisive antithesis which dominates everything else—the attitude toward the Torah. By the Torah I mean the Mosaic law, as recorded in the five books of Moses and as found in its central formulation, the Ten Commandments. I contend: had Jesus fallen into the hands of the Wilderness sectarians, they would have murdered him as ruthlessly as did the Pharisees.²¹ For in the climactic period of his ministry, Jesus opposed the spirit of the Wilderness sectarians just as relentlessly as he did the spirit of the Pharisees.²²

²¹ The *Damascus Document* ix.6, x.1, and xv.4-5 (on the death penalty), and xii.21 (on violating the Torah).

²² According to John 2:1 ff., Jesus had, demonstrably enough, set himself apart from the ascetic spirit of the Wilderness sect and of the Baptist's movement (on which, cf. Mark 2:18 and Luke 7:33), already in the period when he was in the circle of John the Baptist (John 2:13 ff. notwithstanding). [On the whole problem, cf. Professor Stauffer's *Jesus and his Story*, in the translation by Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM, 1960), pp. 59-69, or in the translation by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), pp. 63-78.—EDITOR.]

then it is better to let the man perish than to break the Sabbath for his sake. The whole Qumran movement started when certain people refused to take up arms on the Sabbath, letting themselves be butchered simply in order to avoid breaking the Sabbath. It is from such an attitude that their ethic developed, an ethic determined by the axiom: the law of God supersedes the welfare of man. Such is the spirit of the Wilderness sect. Their ethic is "Torah piety"; their Torah piety, however, is super-piety. This super-piety thrives on their making the Torah more rigorous, more severe, more radically demanding. Hence the Wilderness sectarians are so sure of divine favor: they are so bitterly serious about the Torah and make their own lives as burdensome as possible with so many extra demands.

The increased severity of the prohibitions is reinforced by the increased severity of the penalties for the violation of these prohibitions. We turn to another passage from the *Damascus Document*: "Everyone possessed by the spirits of Belial so that he preaches apostasy shall be judged according to the law concerning false prophets. If, however, someone desecrates the Sabbath or the festivals by accident, he shall not be executed but shall be placed under surveillance. Once he has been cured and has been under surveillance for seven years, he may again be readmitted into the community."²⁵

²⁵ The *Damascus Document* xii.2-6; cf. the *Rule of the Community* (QS) viii.21 ff. and ix.1 ff., among other passages. [At xii.3 of the *Damascus Document*, where Professor Stauffer refers to "the law concerning false prophets" ("nach dem Gesetz über den Lügenpropheten"), the Hebrew literally reads (and most English translators of the *Damascus Document* render it thus), "the ordinance concerning sorcerers and wizards." The reference, most commentators explain, is to Deut. 13:6, according to which, those even of one's own family who preach idolatry are to be stoned to death; but there is also a connection with Lev. 20:27, according to which mediums and wizards are to be stoned to death. The *Damascus Document* thus commands for those who preach apostasy the fate of stoning, a fate reserved for "sorcerers and wizards" (Lev. 20:27) and for prophets and dreamers who entice men into idolatry (Deut. 13:6). Dr. Stauffer, as we shall see, prefers to see Deut. 13:6 in light of 13:1-5, where the same punishment is prescribed for false prophets; hence his phrase, "law concerning false prophets."—EDITOR.]

Now, a careful distinction is here made between a transgression of the law that is intentional and one that is accidental; the groundwork for this distinction had already been laid in the Old Testament.²⁶ In the *Damascus Document*, however, there now appears a further heightening of the law. Here the example used to illustrate the intentional transgressor of the Torah is the preacher of apostasy. Such a transgressor is to be judged according to the law concerning false prophets. The reference is to the following precept in the Torah (Deut. 13:1-5): “If a prophet arises among you, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, ‘Let us go after other gods,’ which you have not known, ‘and let us serve them,’ you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him, and keep his commandments. . . . But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God . . . to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk.”

In the Old Testament the false prophet is considered an instrument and messenger of God, but a messenger through whom God proves or tests us. In the *Damascus Document* the false prophet is viewed much more critically. For here he appears as someone possessed by the spirits of Belial. He is pictured as demoniac. He is an instrument of hell, who does demonic signs and wonders in order to entice people to fall away from the Torah of God. The actual punishment for the preacher of such apostasy is the same in Qumran as in the Old Testament—death. This punishment obviously cannot be made more severe, unless the execution is preceded

²⁶ Num. 15:24-29 (sin offering for unwitting infraction of the Torah); 15:30-31 (death for intentional transgression of the Torah, “with a high hand”).

by scourging or torture and a specially brutal form of execution is employed (as happened in the case of Jesus). Of this, however, the Wilderness texts published thus far have said nothing.

The example used to illustrate the accidental breaking of the Torah in the paragraph cited above is of a man who accidentally violates a Sabbath law. In the Old Testament he must bring a sin offering. The same holds true in the rabbinical teachings.²⁷ In the *Damascus Document* he is dealt with much more severely and rigorously. He is excommunicated for seven years and placed under the surveillance of ecclesiastical police. This is the sort of heightening of the Torah that we meet here and everywhere in the Wilderness texts.

But is there nowhere in these texts—texts that speak so deeply and earnestly about faith, about distress and the glorification of God in time of distress—anything about the merciful God of the Old Testament, anything about repentance and forgiveness of sins? Yes, indeed; in fact, very much. I know of almost no texts in which the word “repentance” appears as frequently as it does throughout the Wilderness texts. In these documents, however, the concept of repentance has been ritualized. To repent means to subject oneself to a certain rite. Again and again the Qumran Psalms utter profound and grand words about the merciful God, grace, justification. A careful look at their practice, however, reveals that the Wilderness sectarians have clericalized or institutionalized the great Old Testament idea of the forgiveness of sins. The office of the forgiveness of sins has been placed into the hands of the priesthood. In the Wilderness community a person can receive the forgiveness of sins from God only if he turns to those in spiritual authority over him, for the Lord God has placed the power of binding and loosing

²⁷ Shab. 7.1. Here a sin offering suffices even perhaps for intentional transgression of the Sabbath. [English translation of Shab. 7.1 in Danby, *op. cit.*, p. 106; or in Freedman, *op. cit.*, Vol. I (London, 1938), p. 324.—EDITOR.]

in the hands of these authorities. He who seeks the forgiveness of sins is dependent on the priest. Hence there arises the paradoxical (though in the history of religions by no means unique) situation that nothing strengthens the power of the Qumran priesthood as much as the sins that the laity commit. For the more the layman sins, the more dependent he becomes on the priesthood, which ultimately controls all the means of grace.²⁸

So much for the Torah piety of the Wilderness sectarians. We now turn to the question of Jesus.

²⁸ Cf. the *Rule of the Community* (,QS) i.21 ff.; ii.1 ff.; v.21; ix.7; the *Damascus Document* ix.13; xiii.9 ff.; xiv.19 ff.; *Qumran Cave 1* (*op. cit.*, note 6 above), p. 124, lines 22 ff., and p. 126, lines 23 ff., among other places. We cannot here enter into the matter of relationship between canonical authorities and jurisdictions. [The fragments from Cave 1, mentioned by Professor Stauffer, ,QSb or ,Q28b, commonly called the *Book of Blessings*, can be found in translation in Burrows, *More Light*, *op. cit.*, p. 397; in Gaster, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90; in Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-12; or in Vermes, *op. cit.*, 207-208.—EDITOR.]

JESUS AND THE TORAH

WHAT was Jesus' attitude toward the Torah? This is a difficult question because it is intertwined at many points with the critical study of the gospels. We will therefore here limit ourselves to a relatively simple aspect of the larger problem, the question of the Sabbath. Regardless of what a person may think about individual gospels or passages in the gospels, all four gospels report that Jesus expressly broke the Sabbath law. This is confirmed to us by Jewish testimony and, to this very day, by the fact that all of us who call on the name of Jesus and who call ourselves by his name celebrate not the Sabbath but Sunday, the festival of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Christian church would never have had the courage and clean conscience to do that, had not Jesus first broken on principle with the Sabbath.

By reference to four familiar gospel narratives we can here briefly illustrate the position of Jesus on the Sabbath question.

There is the story of plucking ears of grain on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-28), which climaxes in the saying of Jesus: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath." We see at once that this is a clear and blunt challenge of the Sabbath practice of the Wilderness sect ("The Sabbath law is more important than the welfare of man"), as well as a challenge of the Sabbath piety of the Pharisees.²⁹

²⁹ The oft-cited rabbinic aphorism, "The Sabbath is delivered to you, you are not delivered to the Sabbath" [which might seem to be a parallel from Pharisaic sources to Jesus' words at Mark 2:27, "The Sabbath was

The response of "Torah Judaism" does not fail to come. There appears a delegation of scribes who explain: Jesus is possessed, is a false prophet, and does his miracles through demonic power (Mark 3:22). Obviously, these people have already applied Deuteronomy 13 to Jesus and reached their conclusion in the following way. Jesus does miracles; no one can or wishes to dispute this. However, he is breaking the Sabbath and thus the Torah; no one disputes that either. He even lets his disciples break the Sabbath. This has already gone beyond the routine breaking of the Torah; it is out-and-out preaching of apostasy. All this amounts to one thing: he is a false prophet who calls for defection from the Torah, basing his call on his miracles, which have, accordingly, a demonic origin—precisely the argument which the Qumran exegesis of Deuteronomy 13 had set forth. In short, he is guilty of death.³⁰

The healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-18) occurs on the Sabbath, at first, however, without any violation of the Sabbath because Jesus himself did not move a finger. Nevertheless, the Sabbath is broken because Jesus says to the lame man who is now healed, "Take your bedding and carry it home." This is a forbidden Sabbath activity. And Jesus summons this man to do it! Consequently, although Jesus does not personally break the Sabbath, here also he again proves himself to be a deliberate preacher of apostasy, who encourages others to break the Sabbath. As different as are the two evangelists, Mark and John, and as different as are the two events (Mark 2:23-28 and John 5:1-18),

made for man, not man for the Sabbath"], refers to the danger to one's life which arises in a period of persecution; cf. Jacob Levy, *Neuhebräisches und chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Talmudim und Midraschim* (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1876-89), Vol. III (1883), p. 177.

³⁰ Already in Galilee they thus attempted, by more or less legal means, to do away with Jesus; cf. Mark 3:6 and Luke 4:29, among other references. That they did not succeed is explained by political factors and questions of legal jurisdiction.

we can see complete agreement in this, that Jesus could not but appear as a preacher of apostasy in the Sabbath question.

In the healing of the man blind from birth (John 9:1 ff.), Jesus himself breaks the Sabbath, for he stirs the clay. This is an action which is forbidden on the Sabbath. The Jews draw the conclusion which every Jew loyal to the Torah must draw with Deuteronomy 13 in mind: "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the sabbath" (John 9:16).

Let it not be said that Jesus broke the Sabbath in order to help someone in distress, to save someone's life. All the healings that Jesus accomplishes on the Sabbath are, without exception, healings of diseases for which an immediate cure is not crucial. The lame man has been lying at the pool for thirty-eight years. The man born blind has been so for probably thirty years. Surely he could wait five or ten hours more until (according to Jewish calculation) the Sabbath is over. Or the man with the withered hand: presumably he has been crippled for years and years. Can he not wait the few hours remaining until evening? Jesus, however, purposely heals these chronic illnesses on the Sabbath, although they neither threaten life nor are even accompanied by pain, in order to break the Sabbath law, and thereby to show that he is the son of Him who has been ceaselessly at work since the end of the seventh day of creation (John 5:17).

The Sabbath practice of Jesus represents his style and standard of life in general. Life means service, creative service to man. Jesus works around the clock like the head surgeon of a large hospital (Mark 1:32-34). He hardly finds time to eat (Mark 3:20). The God of Jesus Christ does not love "the deeds of piety." He does not love the self-righteous knights of virtue nor the holy men of asceticism. He loves productive personalities. He loves creative service to life. The God of the Old Testament—at any rate, the God of the Qumran sect—loves prohibitions. The Decalogue—and this is simply an indisputable fact—consists of nine prohibitions and one positive commandment (the command to honor one's parents), which is linked, however, to a reward motivation. The texts from

the Wilderness teem with prohibitions. In the genuine sayings of Jesus there appears only one single prohibition, the prohibition against divorce (Mark 10:9), precisely the prohibition which was being taken exceedingly lightly by the Jews of Jesus' day. All the other maxims of Jesus are of a positive nature. The Wilderness sect declares in so many words, "What a man does not want done to him, he should not do to his neighbor either."³¹ Jesus, however, requires: "Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so them" (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31). This is the difference between a negative and a positive ethic, a prohibitive and a productive ethic, between a legalistic and a creative ethic, between the ethic of the Wilderness sect and the ethic of Jesus.

Let me repeat, however: the question here is not simply one of differences, but one of antitheses; it is an inexorable "either/or." The antithesis between Jesus and the Wilderness sect is, however, nowhere sharper than in the question of the forgiveness of sins. The God of Jesus Christ knows no priestly forgiveness of sins; He knows no ritual forms of penance. He forgives with no if's or but's. He forgives as does the father of the prodigal son: he sees him and he has compassion on him (Luke 15:20). Jesus too forgives with no if's or but's, with the freedom and full authority of the Father, independent of all ecclesiastical proceedings, prescriptions, and reservations (Luke 7:48). He has no love for the ritualistic recitals of repentance (Matt. 6:7; Luke 11:4, 18:13). In the

³¹ Hebrew *Testament of Naphtali* 1.6; cf. *Tobit* 4.15, *Hillel* in *Shab.* 31a, *Philo* as quoted in *Eusebius' Praeparatio Evangelica* 8.7, among other places. [This so-called "negative version of the Golden Rule" appears in varying form in a number of places in antiquity; cf. D. M. Beck, "Golden Rule, The," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), II, 438, where most of the examples above are quoted. The first example cited by Professor Stauffer, from the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, does not appear in R. H. Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha*, *op. cit.*, but in his earlier critical edition, *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs . . . together with . . . some Hebrew Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 239.—EDITOR.]

Gospel of Mark the noun “repentance” (*metanoia*) does not even appear in the genuine sayings of Jesus. Nor does it appear in the Fourth Gospel. The latter fact, moreover, is doubly striking because in other matters the Fourth Evangelist betrays some indebtedness to the Wilderness sectarians, who for their part have a great predilection for the word “repentance.”³² To avoid misunderstanding, it is well to point out that we are here speaking only of the word *repentance*, not of the thing itself. The love for the word *repentance*, however, the fixing of definite exercises, mechanics, and rites of penance—these reflect the temper of Qumran, but not that of Jesus. With him there is no room for institutionalized, clericalized forgiveness. The Christ of the Gospel of Mark forgives the paralytic before this sinful man even says a word (Mark 2:5). How many confessions of sin, how many periods of penance and probation, how many promises and vows there would have to be, for this man to be forgiven in Qumran. The Johannine Christ does not even mention forgiveness at the pool of Bethesda but heals the paralytic—who truly needs forgiveness—without further ado, and later says to him only very briefly, but most unmistakably and irrevocably: “Sin no more, that nothing worse befall you” (John 5:14). Here we again see the deep and fundamental harmony between Mark and John. Jesus speaks with the same absolute certainty to the woman taken in adultery (John 8:11), “Go, and do not sin again.” In short, for Jesus the forgiveness of sins is a creative action; not the concluding formula of some kind of penance ritual, but the creative foundation of a new life. Jesus knows: “My Father is working still, and I am working”; my Father bestows goodness and mercy still, and so do I.

³² Cf., for example, the fragment on Psalm 37, which J. M. Allegro edited, “A Newly Discovered Fragment of a Commentary on Psalm XXXVII from Qumran,” in the *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, LXXXVI (1954), 69-75; further, the *Rule of the Community, Damascus Document*, etc. [A translation of this commentary on verses from Psalm 37 appears in Burrows, *More Light*, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-03; in Gaster, *op. cit.*, pp. 258-61, 269-71; in Dupont-Sommer, *The Essene Writings*, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-73; and in Vermes, *op. cit.*, pp. 204-43.—EDITOR.]

We know how the men of the Great Sanhedrin reacted: "This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). They declared Jesus a false prophet, a preacher of apostasy, and a blasphemer.³³ The basis for this triple condemnation, however, was the fact that Jesus broke the Mosaic law concerning the Sabbath, not inadvertently, not in an emergency that would be covered by the exceptions to the law, but very deliberately. For according to Jewish belief the Torah was the measure of all things, the God-given criterion for testing the spirits of men. Therefore a man who breaks the Torah cannot come from God but must come only from the devil.

That is the logic of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. It is exactly the same logic that we encounter in the Wilderness texts, where we read at the conclusion of the Sabbath precepts: "Everyone possessed by the spirits of Belial so that he preaches apostasy shall be judged according to the law concerning false prophets."³⁴ The Sabbath laws were considerably more rigorous in Qumran than in Jerusalem. However, not only did Jesus altogether reject this heightening of the law; what is more, he fundamentally repudiated the Mosaic Sabbath law itself. For this reason there is no relationship and connection between the spirit of Jesus and the spirit of the Wilderness sect. For this reason there could be no fellowship between Jesus and Qumran, no understanding, no tolerance. There

³³ Mark 2:7, 3:22, 14:64; Matt. 27:63; cf. Sanhedrin 43a, 67a; Tertullian, *De spectaculis* 30. [For the rabbinic references in English translation, see *Sanhedrin*, trans. Jacob Shachter and H. Freedman, Vol. I (London: Soncino Press, 1935), pp. 281-82 and pp. 456-57, note (5) in *The Babylonian Talmud, Seder Nezikim*, ed. I. Epstein; or cf. R. Dunkerley, *Beyond the Gospels* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1957), pp. 48-55. The passage in Tertullian, where Jesus is spoken of as a "Sabbath-breaker," a Samaritan, and "devil-possessed," appears in translation in the *Ante-Nicene Christian Library*, eds. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, Vol. XI, *The Writings of Tertullian Vol. I* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1869), p. 35.—EDITOR.]

³⁴ The *Damascus Document* xii.2-3 (see note 25 above).

Jesus and the Wilderness Community at Qumran

was simply no place for Jesus in the world of the Wilderness sect. Had he sought such a place, had he fallen into the hands of the Wilderness sectarians, according to their logic and exegesis of the Torah they would have condemned to death the rebel against the Sabbath in Qumran; they would have had to condemn him—just as it actually was done in Jerusalem. And that was my thesis. Now we may surely deem it as good as proven.³⁵

In summary: Qumran and Jesus—that is the age-old antithesis, the ever new conflict, between law and gospel in the most sharply defined formulation conceivable. Hence let us investigate the Torah piety of the Wilderness sect thoroughly yet sympathetically, critically and at the same time with understanding. Precisely then will the gospel of Jesus speak to us anew, in all its creative freedom and power, in its majestic glory.

³⁶ Certain problems concerning the texts from the Wilderness which could not be touched upon here have been treated by the author of this essay in the following publications: "Zur Frühdatierung des Habakuk-midrasch," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXVI (1951), cols. 667-74; "Jüdisches Erbe im urchristlichen Kirchenrecht," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXVII (1952), cols. 201-06; "Probleme der Priestertradition," *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXXI (1956), cols. 135-50; "Zum Kalifat des Jakobus," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, IV (1952), 193-214; "Der gekreuzigte Thoralehrer," *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, VIII (1956), 250-53; "Zum apokalyptischen Festmahl in Mc 6, 34 ff.," *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XLVI (1955), 264-66; *Jesus: Gestalt und Geschichte* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1957) [English translation: *Jesus and his Story*, *op. cit.*]; *Jerusalem und Rom im Zeitalter Jesu Christi* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1957); *Die Botschaft Jesu damals und heute* (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1959); "Qumran und die Evangelienforschung," *Universitas*, 14 (1959), pp. 492 ff.; review of *Les Ecrits Esséniens*, by A. Dupont-Sommer, in *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, LXXXV (1960), cols. 282-84; "Qumran und Kerygma," *Evangelische Welt* (1959).

For Further Reading

By ETHELBERT STAUFFER:

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Vol. II (1935), *ego*, "I," pp. 341-60; *hedraios*, "steadfast," pp. 360-62; *heis*, "one," pp. 432-40; *emphusaō*, "breathe upon," p. 533; *epitimaō*, "rebuke," pp. 620-23.

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Jesus and the Wilderness Community at Qumran

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